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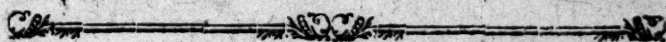
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THE
V O I C E

OF THE

P E O P L E.



1784



OF THE

PEOPLE

THE
VOICE OF THE PEOPLE,
IN A
LETTER
TO THE
SECRETARY
OF HIS GRACE
THE DUKE OF RUTLAND.

BY A PRIVATE VOLUNTEER.

H. Memmius, Pseud.

ARMA FID, QUIBUS NULLA NISI IN ARMIS RELINQUITUR SPES.

LIVY.

DUBLIN:
PRINTED BY P. BYRNE, No. 35, COLLEGE-GREEN.

M,DCC,LXXXIV.

THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

IN A

LETTER

TO THE



BY C. R. A. R. Y.

OF HIS GRACE

THE DUKE OF RUTLAND.

BY A PRIVATE VOLUNTEER.

AND THE OTHERS WHOSE NAMES ARE SET FORTH

IN THE

T H E
VOICE OF THE PEOPLE,
IN A
L E T T E R, &c.

S I R,

DID I believe that a ceremonious Preface to this Letter would convey any assurance of my respect, it should not be wanting: But from the report of those who have the honor of your acquaintance, I hold your understanding in too high esteem to believe that it would serve little purpose than to take up your attention from more weighty considerations.—This indeed does not seem a season for ceremony, nor does the subject of this Letter demand it, as it is entirely confined to public matter, which from the situation you hold in this country

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has peculiar claim to some degree of your attention.

THAT I do not encroach on your patience from any wish to embarrass Government, or inflame the Public, will best appear from the light manner in which I have touched on men and measures, that would have furnished a theme of endless, perhaps unpleasant amplification. Should the information which with all due deference I have presumed to lay before you, not have the good fortune to obtain some part of your credit, it will be then time enough to substantiate my positions by an appeal to the public for the truth of what I have asserted: and to elucidate, by authorities of the first eminence, the points which I have but barely glanced at.—To your extensive knowledge they cannot require illustration; and it would extend the following sheets to a voluminous length, which I shall be studious to avoid.

MAY I therefore be permitted to hope that the hints of a plain man will have candid

candid hearing ; and that they may not be imputed to any other motive than to possess you with facts which may not reach your ear, from those who hold the confidence of Administration ; and which if attended to may avert both tumult and violence.—Happy should I consider myself could I be the least instrumental in opening the eyes of ministers, and of preserving the connection indissoluble between two countries allied by the most cogent circumstances of neighbourhood and policy. I am well aware, and fully conscious of the great inferiority I stand in to those whose province it is to advise.—But you, Sir, are not to be told that *truth* is too frequently withheld from the ears of great men ;—and that nothing recommends so much to the favour of a court as to smooth the GRIM-VISAGED face of politics ; to scout the idea of popular commotion, whilst there is a standing army in this kingdom ; and to ridicule every measure that is not in unison with Government. Should that fallacious practice continue, I really tremble for the consequences to this kingdom ; and submit with all humility

whether or not there has been a single event of consequence from the commencement of war in America, to the late CONVENTION in Dublin, that does not justify the apprehension of any man who is capable of drawing a conclusion, and has informed himself on the subject of *Irish* affairs. I feel it the more incumbent to trespass on you by this Letter, as you are a stranger in this island; and as the subject which has chiefly induced it has not gone abroad into the public prints, lest it might be thought *evaporated*, at the very moment of its being in the highest state of fermentation. The point I allude to, is the REFUSAL to *pay taxes*, in case the national object (A PARLIAMENTARY REFORM) should not be conceded. You will learn, Sir, that the idea of such a REFUSAL was *scouted* both *in*, and *out* of the House of Commons, in the same contemptuous and intemperate manner with which the most moderate and respectful Proceedings of the Convention were treated. It is true, there might be found a precedent for such conduct in the beginning of the American war;

war ; but the conclusion of it one would have thought might have made us somewhat cautious in an adoption of the experiment. I recollect that the possibility of such an event was particularly derided by a gentleman (Mr. Fitzgibbon) to whom, without any intimacy of connection, I have been always partial, not only from the great acumen of his abilities, but, as I firmly believe, he is one of the very few who speak and act from principle ; a deportment which I freely confess reconciles me to the man, although I lament his error.—Now, Sir, give me leave to tell you why the reports so universally prevailing, and so generally credited, that the people will REFUSE paying Taxes, is not destitute of foundation ; and to shew that the argument used to prove that such refusal would at least partially, if not totally dissolve the constitution, are held in utter contempt by the body of the nation.

It must be needless to trouble you with the reiterated arguments against *taxation without representation* : Let it therefore suffice, that

that *the people* in the first place do *not* consider themselves represented; and assert that the taxes which have been imposed for the current year, were laid on and carried, with other obnoxious measures, contrary to the most decided sense of the nation, by resolutions that were authenticated and conveyed in the most solemn and constitutional manner from every place where their opinion was not *smothered* and *kept back* by the most notorious exertions of ministerial influence.— And by instructing their real representatives to vote for no other than a six months money bill, they did virtually signify a determination to refuse to pay any taxes that were imposed for a longer time, should a reform in parliament not take place.— They now think it impossible to adopt a more peaceable or more justifiable method of recovering their long lost rights. They think, Sir, that in the whole world of politics there is not a maxim in itself so absurd, or so completely fraught with the most malignant consequences, than that slavish and ministerial doctrine which has of late been so assiduously propagated by a certain set of gentlemen

gentlemen in this kingdom; I mean the *majority* in parliament.—Those gentlemen have endeavoured to prove that it is the *duty* of **THE PEOPLE** to submit implicitly to the acts of the legislature, be they however inconsistent with justice and equity; subversive of the rights of men; or repugnant to what they consider the principles of the constitution.

THE people say, Sir, this charge is supported in the treatment which was given by a venal majority in the House of Commons of this Kingdom, to a measure which burst from the very soul of this country. **THE PEOPLE** are of the mind that had such a principle always prevailed in Great Britain or Ireland, we should long ere now have fallen into the same state of open servitude which most of the neighbouring nations have suffered: Nations that seem now beginning to vibrate as it were by sympathy with the spirit that glows in every fibre of this country. **THE PEOPLE**, Sir, are decided that had such doctrine been the eternal curse of this nation, there would have
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been no reformation of religion; no *revolution* in the state, or emancipation from arbitrary government. They are clearly convinced that it is more correspondent with the dignity of human nature and reason to believe that in every state where the people do enjoy, or are intended to enjoy liberty, RESISTANCE to all unlawful acts of government, and every act of oppression is warranted and justified; or that otherwise, "liberty were but a name, and government a curse."——The men of this country, Sir, are persuaded that the good of the people governed, is the original, the reason, and the end of all good government; and that when the mal-administration of governors has wrought the subversion of those ties by which they and the governed were at first united, they not only may, but must, and will take the rein of government into their own hands. THE PEOPLE consequently think that they who say it either is seditious or unconstitutional to tell them they are *absolved* from obedience either to King, or Parliament, when one or the other or both shall have violated their rights, or failed

ed in their duty to them, do not speak common truth, reason or justice. They think, and they do not scruple to say, that on the same principle men may not oppose the incursions of robbers and pirates, because it might occasion disorder and bloodshed. But in such cases should any mischief arise, they are clear that it is not to be laid to the door of those who defend their own rights; but of them who invade the rights of others. It would they think seem an extraordinary position, that an honest innocent man should surrender his rights for the sake of peace to him who chuses to lay violent hands on them; and that the peace of the world would then consist entirely in violence and rapine; and be preserved only for the convenience of tyrants and thieves.

—If there is any truth in these premises (to the contrary of which no person has been able yet to persuade them), a question naturally occurs:—Whether it is best for the general good of mankind that the people should be always committed and exposed to the insatiable-lust of power, or that the ru-

lers should sometimes be checked, or opposed when they grow exorbitant in the exertions of it, and pervert it to their destruction instead of their happiness. Now, Sir, it is almost unnecessary to inform you that they no longer look up to parliament in its original intent, as guardians of the People; framing salutary means to provide for the exigencies of government;—careful to oppose the encroachments of the crown, and watchful to counteract the excess of ministerial cupidity. On the reverse, they are witnesses to a commerce of corruption permitted without limitation between ministers and representatives, whilst the trade of their country languishes under restraint by the means of that pernicious traffick. They therefore think it high time to take some efficient step either to terminate, or in some measure to correct grievances to them *intolerable*. Should their present plan be unsuccessful, they cannot conceive a more peaceable manner of advancing to that great object than by REFUSING to pay taxes, in the imposition of which they know their consent was never obtained; and to the
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continuance of which they are as much averse as they were to the infliction. They look up with hope to honest independent judges, and think it not only improbable but impossible if ever such REFUSAL should come to a trial before them, that it would share the same fate with the question of the *ship money* in the reign of King Charles the first, when eight of the judges were either so prepossessed or so prostituted as to deliver it as their opinion, that in cases of *necessity* the King himself might impose taxation, and he himself be sole judge of the *necessity*: And that were it to be decided by an impartial Irish Jury, or almost any Jury that could now be found in any county of this kingdom, it would certainly be given in favour of the People.—And although it is still possible it *might* be annulled in the upper House of Parliament—the experiment, however, they conceive might produce some salutary consequences. In short, they think that if at any period of history there ever has been any sensible effect produced by POPULAR interposition, that the possession of those weapons, and that address in using them,

them, which always constitute *power*, and sometimes passes for *right*, is the CRISIS for exertion.

You, Sir, may rely that the spirit of cool investigation has kept an equal pace even amongst the lowest classes of the people, with a resolution of asserting their rights. It will not therefore, in any sort appear extraordinary or incredible, that the highest authorities are now familiar to descriptions of men whose sphere of information was formerly confined to the ploughshare.— You may be satisfied that almost all the farmers, and many of the lowest order of the peasantry do at this moment possess a degree of constitutional knowledge, which I will take upon me to assert, many in the House of Commons were ignorant of at so short a distance back as ten years.

A MAN now, who possibly sold the shirt which your servant wears, will tell you that Mr. *Locke* has affirmed that THE PEOPLE have a right to RESIST the *whole* legi-

legislative power if ever *that* power should attempt to enslave them.—The shopkeeper who sells a penny-worth of tobacco will agree with him, and say that Lord Bolingbroke has not been less explicit on that subject:—and that in his Dissertation on Parties he has expressly asserted, “ That the
 “ whole legislature is a supreme, and may
 “ be called in one sense an absolute, but in
 “ none, an arbitrary power.—It is limited
 “ to the public good of society.—It is a power
 “ that hath no other end but preservation,
 “ and therefore can never have a right to
 “ destroy, enslave, or designedly to impoverish the subjects; for the obligations of
 “ the law of nature cease not in society.—
 “ If therefore you put so extravagant a case
 “ as to suppose the two Houses of Parliament concurring to make at once a formal
 “ cession of their own rights and privileges,
 “ and of those of the whole nation to the
 “ crown, and ask *who hath the right* and the
 “ means to resist the supreme legislative
 “ power?—I answer, the *whole nation*
 “ hath the right; and a PEOPLE who deserve liberty will *find the means*. An attempt
 “ tempt

“tempt of this kind would break the bargain between the King and the Nation, the Representative and collective Body of the People, and would dissolve the Constitution. From hence it follows, that the nation which hath a right to preserve its constitution, has a right to RESIST an attempt that leaves no other means of preserving it, but those of RESISTANCE. From hence it follows, that if the constitution was actually dissolved, as it would by such an attempt of the three estates, the PEOPLE would return to their original, their natural right of restoring the same constitution, or of making a new one. No power on earth could claim any right of *imposing* a constitution upon them; and less than any, that King, those Lords, and those Commons, who having been entrusted to preserve, had destroyed the former.” The poor dejected tradesman who returns at night to his family with the hard-earnings of labour sufficient perhaps to appease, but far from satisfying the demands of nature, will say,

say, that it is, the fashion now a-days to treat his employers and all persons as *mob* and *rabble*, who presume to take any notice, or express their disapprobation of Ministry or the Parliament; and that he has heard them say on the other hand, that the very same language was held by the brow-beating cavaliers of *Charles* the First at the commencement of the civil war; and by the wicked counsellors of the Second *James* on the eve of the Revolution:—and that every description of persons were then considered as *mob* that would not subscribe the fashionable doctrine, and sacrifice their liberty and property, to fill up the measure of tyranny and ambition. And all these persons I have been speaking of, will join in saying, that a ministry must surely be either the most stupid or the most obstinate men on earth who do not perceive by the property, by the character, and by the influence of those who formed the late *Convention* (in which they include the Constituents as well as the Representatives of that Body) that if ever there was a formidable

midable *mob* in any country of the globe, the *mob* of Ireland is not the last in consequence.

I BEG leave also to assure you, Sir, that several of them have carried their notions on the nature of our Constitution to so high a pitch, as to insist on it that the provocation which the People now feel to assert, at least, an *equal* weight in the Constitution with either of the other estates, which they have long been denied, is increased by an idea that from the laws of reason they are certainly intitled to *more* than an equal share of power with the King or the Lords, in as much as *they* are the origin of both.—Their liberties they know are limited by the law; yet in some senses they think may be called and above all municipal law unbounded; because THE PEOPLE being in effect the *real* source of all legitimate authority, they must necessarily in reason have the power of ascertaining their own liberties. This power they no doubt may delegate to others, but can never
entirely

entirely alienate ; and if their delegate should so far abuse it as to risque the subversion of national liberties, THE PEOPLE, they say, may resume it into their own hands, and become their own legislator.—The *jus divinum* of monarchs has been long ago reprobated and exploded ; and if monarchs are compelled to acknowledge themselves the servants of THE PEOPLE—they think it would be rather a mortifying presumption in the servants of Government to arrogate a continuance of feudal vassalage ; from which they feel themselves very little removed whilst the state of representation is so absurdly imperfect as they now consider it to be.

THE point therefore, Sir, they aim at is, to restore the Constitution to its original state ; to place it on the same ground it stood before the corruption of legislators and supineness of the people had sapped its foundation. They desire not any innovation whatever.—They differ from some persons, who say that the Constitution is

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so far debilitated as not to be within the power of a recovery; and that to change the mode of treating it, at this time, would produce a fatal paroxysm.—They think that were nature left to itself, there is sufficient stamina existing, when brought forward and cherished with care and delicacy, to expel all the poison that has crept in; and that by adopting the precept of the illustrious LORD CHATHAM, and pouring in a supply of new health, it will rise up of itself into all the dignity and respect that belong to the august and venerable fabric.

THE Volunteers of Ireland have been temperate in every instance since their institution; and for that reason only it is, they suppose, that some people really doubt or affect to ridicule their strength, competence, or resolution to ACT, should fatal extremity call them to the field.—I hope, from my heart, that they may never be compelled to bring the strongest conviction of error home to the minds of those

those who are of that opinion. But they consider that a supposition of their timidity or impotence being drawn from such conduct, to be the evidence of infinite weakness and prepossession; for it is by preserving that uniform moderation they defeat the intention of their enemies, who would wish to provoke or betray them into the commission of some inadvertent act that might render them the aggressors in hostility.—It is not, they think, on any ground of philosophical or historical reasoning the presumption can be supported.—That they are not deficient in personal ability, I suppose, will be admitted: that they understand at least the theory of discipline is, I believe, allowed: and that the practice would soon follow will not, I fancy, be denied. But they are not Regulars or Veterans, says the soldier of Government:—And they will say on the other hand, that it is not requisite to be either the one or the other to flatter themselves with the most persuasive ideas of their capacity to the roughest task of war:

and they take precedents for their opinion from modern as well as ancient facts; from a small island to a great continent, from Corsica to America, and back again to Europe. What was the first?—A nest of ragged shepherds. The American troops were composed in the beginning almost entirely of inexperienced farmers and peasants. How did the young and motley regiment of General Dalrymple, and the new regiments which went out to different quarters of the globe, behave, before they well knew the weight of a musquet? But they had the advantage of discipline, says the Regular, which the Volunteers and such kinds of Militia want. The Volunteers and their friends do not think, however, that it is probable the same motive which could induce them to embrace the dangers and distresses of war, in preference to passive and inglorious tranquillity*, would not suggest to them an in-

* Such sort of tranquillity, "says Montesquie," cannot be called Peace, but the silence of those towns the enemy is going to invade.

stantaneous

stantaneous adoption of that rigid discipline which alone could give efficacy to their valour; and without which every effort would be but a triumph to their enemies. No!—it is not reasonable to think they should be so weak:—they have hitherto given no instances of such imbecility.

THE name of Militia, in which predicament the Volunteers of Ireland, without being (what I never hope to see them) like the present Militia of England, in effect a *standing army*, should not, they think, be so very subject to the contempt of some people as it seems to be:—for *some* of those very gentlemen who would depreciate Volunteers are men of information; and must know that it was with a militia of only ten thousand *Greeks*, that *Xenophon* performed his miraculous retreat of three thousand miles through an enemy's country, in defiance of an immense *standing army* that observed him.—They know that it was with a *Spartan* militia

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Agésilas shook, and had he not been so hastily recalled, would have wrested the diadem from a *Persian* monarch. The innumerable host of *Xerxes* was destroyed by a *Greek* militia. For that matter the greatest part of *Alexander's* army was composed of militia taken out of the several cities of Greece. The same argument in favour of militia might be applied to the Romans:—Whilst they relied on a militia, their conquests were unlimited:—*—but afterwards, during the reign of the Emperors, when by the authority of *Tacitus* they kept up a standing army of 300,000 men, they fell a prey to every barbarous nation that invaded them.

THE PEOPLE of this country, Sir, have been very eminently distinguished by their

* When *Lucullus* was going to engage the immense army of *Tigranes*, he was told it consisted of between three and four hundred thousand men. No matter—said that gallant Roman; surveying his little army of but fourteen thousand, “*The lion never enquires into the number of the sheep,*” and in truth the royal troops proved little better, for they were soon put to flight.

loyalty:

loyalty :—they love their Sovereign, and would deplore the necessity of recurring to any step which might encrease the confusion of his empire. But they glow with the ardour of hope and enthusiasm when they reiterate the catalogue of struggles between the principles of freedom and oppression; they pant for a participation in the fame of their progenitors; and think it a duty to be as bold in their RESISTANCE to aristocratic domination, as their ancestors were to regal tyranny. You cannot wonder therefore that they are encouraged, and determined to emulate such successful exertions, when they recollect that THE PEOPLE and their Barons, disdaining the tyranny of a Norman Yoke, though aided by an host of foreign troops, extorted the *great charter* of British Liberties. That the People compelled *Henry* the Third to delegate his royal power to twenty-four persons, twelve to be chosen by himself, and the rest by the Peers, reserving *only* to the King the chief place in all public assemblies, because he conspired against the rights of the people;

ple; and they, determined to be free, armed with the bright shield of justice, declared war, and reduced him to a proper sense of his duty as a Sovereign. They recollect the wretched and unhappy reign of *Edward* the Second, who suffered himself to be directed by ministers who were hostile to the people, and was at length deposed by them. They recollect, that in the reign of *Richard* the Third, the people seized the judges, and compelled the king to discard his ministers, and call a free Parliament—which attainted the *Archbishop* of *York*, the *Duke* of *Ireland*, the *Earl* of *Suffolk*, *Chief Justice Tresilian* and others; the latter of whom and several more were hanged, the rest of the judges banished, and the king himself deposed a few years afterwards. The many severe conflicts in the reign of *Charles* the First against arbitrary power, are green in their memory;—and if the principles on which the last revolution was founded did justify the RESISTANCE to a Sovereign, they cannot see why the usurpation of another power, more formidable

dable because more extensive, more intolerable because attempted by fellow subjects, whose interest should be inseparable from their own, might not justify another, did they find it essential to the recovery of their franchises.

THEY know that what they wish, a REFORM IN PARLIAMENT, is termed by the servants of government *innovation*, but they do not consider it in that point of view:—and if it really was, they are persuaded it is a much *milder innovation* than any of those I have been citing; for they in their days, it is taken for granted, were thought very great *innovations* by the persons who felt them most *sensibly*, and, I dare say, least suspected them. If therefore, Sir, by those, and several other cases which you know might be adduced, it appears that the people will some time after long suffering, venture to assert their rights against the oppression of MONARCHS by having recourse to the *dernier resort*, is it, I repeat, an unfair deduction, that the same sense of

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injury

injury will lead their minds to revolt against a palpable encroachment on their rights by *fellow subjects*.

THE people are by no means ignorant that in the conclusion which must ensue, in case of things coming to the LAST APPEAL, many temporary inconveniencies and embarrassments must arise, should they not meet that reciprocity of sentiment in the greater part of their fellow subjects of Great Britain. But those difficulties, they say, are "foreign to the soul:" nor can they for the most obvious reasons be of equal severity or duration with those which their friends have patiently sustained in America; and for which they consider themselves completely rewarded by the victory of their arms. But they are far from thinking that the bulk of the British Nation will not be *with* them; in which case they apprehend very little difficulty in the attainment of their wishes. They say it is a maxim in reasoning, that every thing is sufficiently proved which admits
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of no greater proof; and they think it is impossible for any greater proof to exist, except that of actual success, that the present temper of Great Britain is congenial to their own, than the unremitting efforts towards a Parliamentary Reform which have been made both in England and Scotland, in opposition to the various influence and artifice that have been exerted to defeat it: And that had not the necessity of such reform in Britain as well as in this country been sufficiently evident by a long and fatal experience, the present distracted state of the British Parliament would make it clear to the most inert and muddy understanding. Were it unhappily otherwise, and a total disunion to be the case, it is almost needless to say that the alternative is too plainly to be read in the language of the country; not, Sir, in the conversation of interested or prejudiced men, whose consequence will be precisely co-existent with the grievance which is complained of. A man now, Sir, I make no doubt, in several societies of the great, would be

thought a very fit subject for the *strait waistcoat*, who would pretend to say that an Irish Protestant subject could ever think of applying for assistance in the recovery of his rights to a French King. I am warranted in my conjecture by the derision with which every man recollects the possibility of a similar application from the Americans was treated; and yet I know that it is a matter spoken of with familiarity, not only by all the violent people, but by some of the most thinking men of landed, and of personal property, and almost all the lower class in the kingdom.—Than myself no person can more sincerely deprecate the event; but I know the fact to be as I state it. They are aware, Sir, that there is infinite difference between the situation, size, and resource of America, and of Ireland; but they think there cannot exist a greater difference between any two things, than the situation which England stood in at the time she began the war with America, and at the present moment. For the loss of the one, she had the friendly bosom of this island

island left to rest on for support;—bereaved of that, she has the universe for an enemy.

IN the government, therefore, of such men who consider the peace of servitude worse than the war of freedom, the maxim of a great statesman should be continual present,—“ Let him who would fear nothing, despise nothing.” They ask what did the whole force of *Spain* against a few revolted provinces, when the people smarted under the lash of oppression?—How many armies did she lose?—How many millions were thrown away to recover what a few reasonable concessions would have effected?—Her generals had no sooner taken one town, than two revolted; and for one they took by the feat of arms, lost ten perhaps without striking a blow. In short, what by the mutinies of her own soldiers, and other events attendant on her situation, she was in two efforts totally foiled, and obliged to recommence operations on new ground. But mark the event!

event!—The destruction of a mighty empire, in the attempt to oppress a small, but virtuous and determined part of it, whose affections might have been regained by only *conceding* to the demands of common justice. It is the characteristic of great and good minds to *concede*, when the immutable laws of truth and justice solicit reparation. A contrary doctrine has been often fatal to British monarchs; and should be an awful warning against the deleterious counsels of those who mistake rigor for firmness, and submission for security. The spirit of liberty, it has been wisely said, like the elasticity of air, encreases in proportion to the force with which it is compressed; and I firmly believe that every degree of violence and opposition will but serve to invigorate the exertions of this country; and that the argument of *dragooning* will not succeed. What availed to KING JAMES, all his bloody measures, and the *standing army* that enforced them? Destruction and confusion to himself and his friends were the effect. And yet it is
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more than probable had he, instead of throwing his broad seal into the Thames, thrown himself upon his PEOPLE, and *conceded* to their wishes, he need not have been a fugitive through the world. Would the unfortunate and infatuated KING CHARLES have profited less by reasonable *concessions* to his PEOPLE?—No! But had he made one half of the *concessions* to them with a becoming condescension, which were afterwards extorted, that sanguinary war, so fatal to himself and family, had been averted:—The ambition, or personal malice of his enemies would have been defeated:—his reign would have been an example to the policy of kings, and a monument to nations of British loyalty.

BUT for the sake of argument, to view on the most hypothetick ground, the event of *resistance* to taxes which have been or may be imposed on the people of this country, against the general sense, by a parliament in which they consider themselves *not* represented. Let it be supposed, that
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by dividing the Protestants in any degree, the object of Parliamentary Reform could be for a while suspended, either from the first dread of civil war, specious delusion, or a standing army: What would in the end be the probable result? Is it to be imagined that a more formidable confederacy to Britain would not soon be formed, than that of the Protestants of this kingdom? Can it be conceived that the spirit of toleration which beams on this country, and has dissolved the most inveterate chains of bigotry would be inactive? Is it to be thought that the people who could spurn at the trammels of political degradation, will continue *case-hardened* against the admission of their fellow-subjects to the same franchise which they insist on for themselves? Can the most speculative or prejudiced politician indulge in the notion, that the Catholics of this kingdom would not be invited to an union which would be the reciprocal interest of both; or that a worse than *Cappadocian folly* would for a moment retard the coalition? If any
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man can be so idle as to persuade himself that catholics are by the tenets of their religion, necessarily less capable of enjoying the benefit of a free government, they impute it to the most consummate ignorance of facts that are stamped with the sanction of historical authenticity. The continental democracies have established an ample refutation of such visionary prejudices, by preserving to this day a continued system of republicanism; and the records of Arragon and Castile, have left the most eminent examples both of virtue and admonition to regal governments.* In short,

* IN Arragon, although the form of government was monarchical, the genius and principle was truly republican. The king's power was very circumscribed. The *Cortes* or parliament was in fact the efficient and supreme power. In this assembly—no law could pass without the consent of every member who had a right to vote—nor did those at the same time who considered themselves aggrieved address the *Cortes* in the *humble* tone of *supplication*—they insisted on redress;—and demanded impartial justice as the birth-right of freemen.—They had still a more important privilege, which was that of

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uniting

short, from the days of that tyrant *Philip Le Bel*, to the present century, there has not been a period unproductive of Catholic

uniting against their sovereign or his ministers which was distinguished by the name of UNION; equal to our ASSOCIATIONS.—If any of the *popular* immunities were encroached on, and immediate redress did not follow the remonstrance of *the people*, the nobility, magistrates and the people met either in the *Cortes*, or a public assembly for the purpose, which was similar to the late CONVENTION, and binding themselves by mutual obligations of fidelity, they might require the king or his ministers in the name and by the authority of that body to give them redress.—If they were refused, or violence was attempted against them, they might in virtue of the privilege of UNION instantly withdraw allegiance, and proceed to the election of another Monarch. This union was very different from the confederacies in other feudal kingdoms—It was a CONSTITUTIONAL ASSOCIATION which *assumed* royal privileges, that became sanctified by time and necessity—and proceeded in all its operations by regular forms that were established.—The Castilians were in most respects as free as the Aragonese.—They even claimed the right of trying and deposing their Sovereign in form, which they actually exerted against that weak and obstinate prince Henry the fourth of Castile—the particulars of which are mentioned in Robertson's Charles 5th.

efforts

efforts in the cause of liberty: And whilst consecrate to British Patriotism the memory of a PIT, we should recollect the lustre with which it has shone in a neighbouring empire, through the darkest clouds of Catholic faith. When that coalition shall happen they are convinced that the friends of aristocratic influence, and those who adhere to the present system of representation from interested views, will then feel the doctrine of *majorities* with peculiar force, and become profuse in their submissions to an UNITED PEOPLE.

THEY believe that considerable reliance is placed by government in the opposition of some gentlemen in the southern provinces, to liberate the Catholics from every species of political depression, and that the appearance, or risque of any division among Protestants, might produce a defection which would frustrate their pursuit. They cannot forbear to look upon that species of hope to be grounded on the most un-

* See the speech of the *Abbé Pucelle* in the parliament of Paris, in the reign of *Lewis* the 14th.

substantial basis.—They cannot see how any man in the least acquainted with the *real* spirit of the Protestants in this kingdom, can persuade themselves to fancy that the insidious efforts or confirmed prejudices of a few individuals, at least of a very partial and inconsiderable number of their fellow Protestants, should supervene the general sense of a kingdom: That, they think indeed would be a political *synecdoche* of the first magnitude: And were an idea to be submitted so repugnant to every principle they profess, must encrease and rivet the power of that overweening *oligarchy* from which they are struggling to emerge.—They conclude, therefore, that no reasonable or thinking man could digest so gross an absurdity.

It is not possible to believe that even with the *peaceable* attainment of what is looked for, the time can be far distant when the immunities of Irishmen must be diffusive; when men of all descriptions must coalesce by mutual interest, and the pure mantle of religion be reared on the standard of political liberty.

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It is adverse, Sir, to any principle of society, and more so of that which is civilized, to suppose that an inferior number of men formed in the same mould, and animated by the same feelings, can exist without taking in the greater :—and it is a most egregious solecism to suppose that men can ever be conciliated and attached without taking in their interests with the expectation of their personal support. Men will smile at arguments which may be made use of to prove that they must labour, be robbed of that labour, and starve, that others may revel in the plunder of every nerve. It is on that principle, therefore, they say, that governments which are built upon oppression always find it necessary to engage interests sufficient in their support, to overcome all opposition from those who are the subjects of their tyranny, by the communication of unequal and oppressive privileges to the accomplices of their thralldom.—They believe that a national disunion has never been attempted, but with the most sinister intentions, nor effected without the most disastrous consequences :

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all attempts to it, however specious for a time, they say have been the harbingers of calamity ; and the frequency of their success, the misfortune of our Government.— Yet certain it is that the generous credulity whence it has ever been accomplished is one of the most amiable features by which a people can be characterized. The most admirable objects are susceptible of the most striking blemishes:—From the unfulfilled charms of a British Virgin, to the native purity of British Government, you may trace the allegory. They have both been too often a prey to the licentious pollution of artful seducers ; and each of them, in their turns, have received the most fatal wounds through those very parts that were best adapted to the promotion of felicity

THE *left-handed* doctrine of governing upon the principle of disunion, at the same time that it becomes a stigma on our nature, by making war against the very essence of society, seems to have been intended a peculiar curse for our political sins ; as, like the *prototype* of wickedness, it makes
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the happiness of the governing power consist in the misery of the governed ; and thrives by corruption of the innocent, and enslaving the free. But it is to be hoped we are now at the eve of redemption :—if sacrifices can avail, our iniquities should be cancelled, and our remission should be sealed. There is no kind of political reason for the exercise of that *black art* in arbitrary governments ; for in them the interest of the governors demands that a passive and amenable co-operation should be maintained in the governed, by the rod of power, like that of horses in a team, which are made to pull by sound of the thong, or voice of the *driver*. In the freest governments it never could be intended, as inevitable dissolution must pursue its footsteps. It seems, therefore, to have been the unhappy distemper of a British Constitution, which, from superior strength, has been able to combat with the virulence of a consuming malady.—It is the only instance where a constitution has so long survived, when two parts were so frequently

quently confederated to annihilate the third.

PERVERTED ambition has been, and will always for a time, be favourable to that miserable system: the history of our empire is a series of painful, but irrefragable proofs on that subject; and shew that men who have formed themselves into parties at first, even for the best purposes, have been at length played alternately against one another by the depraved machinations of artful men.

I WILL not obtrude, Sir, on your attention at this time, by the selection of particulars, from innumerable instances of the nefarious consequences that have attended that doctrine; nor will I presume to give my opinion at this time on the event of modern experiments.—A short time will probably spare you the trouble of perusing a prolix detail of conjectures. For the present let it suffice to give you the popular opinion of those persons who recommend
 disunion,

disunion, in a few words from Cicero.

*"Quocunque hoc factum est improbe factum
est: quicunque hoc fecit supplicio dignus
est."*

THE PEOPLE, Sir, think that if the records of history, from the *Civil War* to those of later years, which will blush to posterity in the crimsoned tints they have been written, were to be the touchstone of *Machiavilian* policy in the British empire, it would certainly be reprobated from the Cabinet :—and were I to hazard a prediction, it might probably be, that a CRISIS is not very remote, when the bulk of this Kingdom will begin to compare notes, and find that they are only made use of as gamecocks are, pitted to their own destruction for the amusement and profit of their owners ; or like cudgels in the hands of a few men, to knock down each other alternately, until both become the victims of a ruinous contention. It would indeed appear an unaccountable piece of self-delusion in any man not to believe that at a period

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of illumination like the present, men will not *recoil* at the notion of being kept in a state of aristocratic subjugation, which brings to their mind the immeasurable subjection under which the Anglo-Saxons groaned after the Heptarchy, when the authority of kings and existence of the people were controuled and regulated by a *few imperious nobles* *. Indeed there seems to be a striking parallel between the *Clientship* § of those days and the present state of representation, with only this dissimilitude—that the dread of foreign incursions was an extenuation of a voluntary servitude at that time; whereas we, like the stupid ass, invite our burdens by tame submission, and become the contemptible instruments of an ignominious debasement. Such, Sir, you may trust me do THE PEOPLE think the degenerate condition of their Country, from the accumulated weight of taxes, in the imposition of which they consider the bulk of the peo-

* Harold, Godwin, Leofrick, Siward, Morcar, Edwin, Edrick, and Alfrick.

§ Brady's treatise of burroughs.

ple of Great Britain and Ireland (from the distorted state of the Commons) to have as little influence as the people of France had in their ancient assemblies, where the nobility were supreme, and the right of *hallowing* * was the miserable extent of popular privilege. In truth, when one considers the remote purpose of oppressive taxes, and the ridiculous expence in collecting them, with which you, Sir, are unquestionably conversant, and survey the mischievous buffoonery § of representation in this kingdom; and the unreasonable influence that falls to the share of ten persons, high no doubt in situation, but in other points some of them not more than level with their neighbours; one would not much wonder that, with respect to their influence in the state, they should be assimilated to the decemvirs of

* “ De sort que le commun n'eut plus d'autres fonctions dans les assemblées réelles que d'y paroître pour les acclamations que l'usage rendoit nécessaire.” Boulainville. — Mem. Hist.

§ See the state of representation in the Dub. Even. Post, and the number of boroughs under lordly patronage.

Rome. They could, it is true, dispose of life and liberty ; but *our* more generous rulers are content to make us careless of the one, by an endless detraction from the other. AN APPEAL TO THE PEOPLE against their *oppressors*, was the last refuge of Roman virtue ; it has been the irksome alternative of Irish depression. It cannot be positively said, I confess, that it may not be ultimately productive of fatal consequences to a spurious offspring of the Constitution, which has been a weighty burthen, and patiently borne by THE PEOPLE, whilst its existence has been found compatible with their own. But the preserving impulse of nature which has actuated states, as well as individuals, will perhaps justify the expedient, however painful to the feeling : and, like the *Cæsarian* operation, preserve the parent by a sacrifice of the child. The force of example, no doubt, is very operative ; and the contumelious rejection of popular remonstrances has often had very irritating effects : but I should be very sorry indeed to suppose, that either the cause or the effect could be carried to the same

same extremity * in one country which we have read of in the other. It is not however to be wondered at, if the people of this Empire should be admonished by the fate of a great Republic; and reflect with poignant sensations, that the most formidable engine against the liberties of a country is the *unrealized* attribute of a FREE CONSTITUTION.

I SHALL not encroach, Sir, farther on your patience at this time, than to assure you of this melancholy, but unquestionable truth, that THE PEOPLE have now got it rooted in their minds, that the aristocratic *principle* of our Constitution has got an alarming ascendancy in both Kingdoms, by the undeviating progress of corrupt abuse;

* The former consular Law for appealing to the People, the first and only great support of Liberty, having been overturned by the Decemvirs was not only restored, but fortified by a new law, which forbade the creating any magistrate without appeal; and made it lawful to kill any man who did so, without subjecting the killer to a capital penalty.

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and that by removing the corruption, you can alone restore the *principle*, and ward off the fate which befel the Roman, Spartan, Athenian, Carthaginian, and several other States, that were erected on the most virtuous foundation. Nor, in truth, can it appear extraordinary that they should have some latent uneasiness, should they perceive any reason to apprehend that the employments which were created for their convenience, might be made the sources of their oppression:—that the power of the nobility might become almost hereditary §:—that the first dignities might grow the marks of the first servitude:—that the natural right of suffrage was denied, and that the partial indulgence which they were allowed was rendered nugatory, from the interposition of undue influence:—when they daily experience all the evils of oligarchical power without one of the benefits of a pure aristocracy: And fastidious dissipation † and extravagance made the pioneers of corruption.

§ Mont. Spir. Laws.

† Plut. in Pericl. et Demost. Nat.

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THESE circumstances being considered, can it be thought extraordinary that they should have serious thoughts of looking to *themselves* for redress? And there is not any circumstance that seems to alarm them more than the keeping up a large military establishment in time of profound peace, which they cheerfully supported in time of war, although constrained to rely on themselves for the protection which it was paid for *not* affording.—The same sentiments are, it is reported, very prevalent in the opinion of their British neighbours, who without having recourse to the history of *Athens*, *Corinth*, *Rome*, *Denmark*, *Sweden*, *Castile*, and many other nations for the effects of a standing army, and the pretexts that have been made use of for encreasing them, until they became irresistible ;—look back to the annals of their own country for the foundation of alarm ; and reflect on the consequences of STANDING ARMIES with a national tenacity and abhorrence. They recollect that from the reign of *Richard* the Second, until the days of *Charles* the First, there

there were no troops ever kept in the season of peace except the Yeomen of the Guards ; nor that during all the intestine wars of *York* and *Lancaster*, whatever party prevailed, it does appear they ever kept up a standing army.—Such was the political virtue of those days, that the most implacable enmity yielded to the principles of Freedom : And strange as it may seem in so sanguinary a contest, one party would rather hazard their lives and property to the virulence of their adversary, than to *determine* the slavery of their country ; although they themselves were to be tyrants. They would not even permit a standing army in peace in this kingdom, although there were frequent rebellions, and the government therefore was very precarious. And possibly the same argument may have its weight at this time, and they may imagine that the instrument which could coerce the one, might be an effectual weapon to enslave the other.

I SHALL

I SHALL dwell on this topic, Sir, no farther at present, but reserve it, as well as another subject of some importance †, for a moment, when you may be more at leisure. In the mean time, I beg you may rely that I am no enemy to the peace of the empire, or of gentlemen with whom you will probably co-operate; many of whom I highly respect. Allow me, however, to assure you, that the arguments and sophistry of writers, who endeavour to persuade the people into a belief, that those men who lead them forward at present, are *factionous* demagogues, and combined to delude them, have not the least effect on their minds. On the reverse, they revere the name of CHARLEMONT, and those gentlemen who only tell them what their distresses had too feelingly anticipated.— They laugh at the idea that is held out, of the constitution being ruined by REVOLUTIONS* or *Insurrections* ‡, or that they can
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† The fallacy of garbled addresses and the mode of obtaining them in the reign of Charles I.

* Great Britain.

‡ The inhabitants of *Crete*, were so eminently distinguished by their *love of country*, that Cato made it

be accomplished as often as it may please a turbulent spirit to desire alterations in the state:—But they know that both have been *successfully* practised by nations celebrated for their LOVE OF COUNTRY. It is impossible, they know, for a few disappointed or seditious men to shake the government of an empire; yet that such men may certainly create a little commotion at any time; but then it must terminate either in disappointment or ruin. And that until the grievances of a nation become general, and the designs of ambitious men visible to *all*

as proverbial of them as it is now of Ireland. They had a very singular method of keeping their magistrates within bounds; which was that of *insurrection*.—Part of the citizens rose up in arms, put the magistrates to flight, and obliged them to return to a private life. This was *supposed* to be done in consequence of the law. One would have imagined that an institution of this nature, which established sedition to hinder the abuse of power, would have subverted any republic whatever; and yet it did not that of *Crete*, for their LOVE OF COUNTRY was so predominant, that they soon coalesced for the public good, which was called *Syncretism*.—Spirit of Laws—Arist. Polit.

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people, the greatest part are rather disposed to suffer, than right themselves by resistance. That moment the people think, Sir, has arrived; and seems to be acknowledged, not only by the inhabitants, but the MONARCH of a sister kingdom, whose grievances, however acute, are far inferior to those they complain of.

GIVE me leave to conclude, Sir, for the present, by observing that there must certainly be some pre-existing matter in a free government, which no part of it can destroy, otherwise the idea of a constitution cannot exist.—Power must center somewhere: it is originally inherent, or it is by deputation:—If by deputation, there must necessarily have been a power to depute, which power must be prior, and, of consequence, *superior* to the deputed. It is a principle so natural and plain as to have been felt by intuition, in some of the most slavish governments on the earth: It is not strange, therefore, that it should act with redoubled energy on the inhabitants of a nation to whom freedom was

the bequest of their forefathers; and that even were the grievances they complain of merely ideal, they would endeavour to remove them. Philosophers indeed have defined pain and pleasure to be imaginary; which in some degree I believe to be the case, both in the corporeal and political system, between which there may be found a certain analogy. They will tell you also, that there is no patient more desperate or incurable than the *malade imaginaire*: and if one might reason from individuals to multitudes, it would not be very surprising if, in some gloomy fit of spleen, the inhabitants of a moist country might prefer the violent prescription of a COUNTRY quack to the diplomatic regularity of a *state physician*.— I fear, however, that there is too much *reality* in their complaints; and that to relieve them from the disorder that affects them will be an arduous business; but, I trust, not insurmountable to the cordial efforts of great and good men, of whom there are many, I trust, in the realm.— It is natural too, Sir, to suppose that they will

will be sanguine, perhaps impatient, in their expectations from an Administration, who have so avowedly declared themselves friends to the means which they consider the most practicable and consistent—a *Parliamentary Reform*. And they cannot refrain from flattering themselves with hope, that objections better suited to the meridian of a nursery, than an assembly of men, will be exterminated from the councils of a nation: and that the liberality and good sense which has, on other occasions, distinguished several of the opponents to a *Parliamentary Reform*, combined with the cogent arguments of *interest* and *honour*, will triumph over the errors of disingenuous prepossession. Honesty, diligence, and plain sense, they conceive, to be the only necessary ingredients to digest and effect that important object. In the attainment of it, they hope to be a flourishing and happy Kingdom;—without it, a poor and discontented Country, possessing every capacity to insular greatness. You are not, Sir, to be told that freedom begets content and security, the parents
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of population and wealth. Whilst *Greece* and *Italy* preserved their freedom, they were united in the firmest bonds of public amity.—For knowledge and great men they were the admiration of the world; and their *free* government was the source of that memorable superiority they possessed in virtue and happiness. What are they now sunk into?—The wretched emblems of slavery and desolation:—the Campania of Rome, perhaps the finest spot in the globe, is become a deserted wilderness; and the modern Greeks a set of dejected slaves, prostrate to the tyranny of a Turkish despot. Such, Sir, is the importance of political freedom to the preservation of states; and proves to demonstration that the more you make it the *interest* of every man to preserve that state of which he is a member, you will most effectually prevent that *awful crisis* when power must advance beyond limit, or *retreat to its original*. I have the honour to be, with respect,

S I R, *longue vive*
Your very obedient Servant, *soy*
6 DE 58 MEMMIUS.

F I N I S.

